Safer at Home: Eight in Ten Canadians (85%) Vow to Do All They Can to Avoid Going into Long-Term Care

Nine in Ten Concerned About Challenges Faced by LTC System

7 December 2020

Public Opinion / Healthcare

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Toronto, ON, December 7th, 2020 – As weeks go by in the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, it feels as though we pass grim milestone after grim milestone. With the daily caseload continuing to rise, the effect of coronavirus on Canadians living in long-term care (LTC) is now back in the headlines. Canada's rapidly aging population has made the state of long-term care an increasingly relevant subject for many. A new Ipsos poll conducted for the Canadian Medical Association finds that the latest media reports on the effect of COVID-19 are likely exacerbating concerns about LTC facilities, as a majority of Canadians (85%) agree (55% strongly/30% somewhat) that they will do everything they can to avoid long term care as they age.

Widespread Concern About State of LTCs

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unanimous in their desire to avoid long-term care: 94% say they will do everything possible to avoid a stay in LTC (vs. 89% Gen X, 76% Millennial, 66% Gen Z).

Most Who Know Someone in LTC Concerned their Loved One Will Contract COVID-19

The survey shows that the hardships related to LTC have been personal for many. Two in ten respondents (22%) indicate they have a parent, family member, or loved one in long-term care at the present time. The pandemic has been hard on these Canadians: eight in ten (81%) say they are worried their loved one will contract COVID-19 while in LTC. A further 85% express concern about their loved one's mental health in LTC residence.

Not only are these Canadians worried about their loved ones in long-term care, but the pandemic has also had a particularly personal impact for those with loved ones in LTC: six in ten (59%) agree that being responsible for a family member during COVID-19 has negatively impacted their own mental health, and 43% have had to seek financial assistance to support their loved one.

Most Agree LTC Challenges Pre-date Pandemic

While the impact on LTC residents and staff has been especially acute during the pandemic, Canadians harbour no illusions that the challenges facing LTCs are purely a result of the coronavirus. Eight in ten (81%) agree that the challenges facing long-term care homes were evident before the pandemic and that COVID-19 only made them worse, with only a quarter (26%) agreeing that prior to the pandemic, long-term care

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these challenges are primarily due to a lack of national standards for the sector. Furthermore, 73% agree the high number of COVID-19 related deaths in long-term care homes could have been reduced if government had acted sooner.

Whether related to lack of national standards or government action, a lack of trust in government comes through clearly: less than half (43%) agree they trust the provincial/territorial governments to ensure the health and safety of residents in long-term care homes, a figure that falls to 39% for trust in the federal government. Both statements show regionally consistent views with no significant variations by observed at the provincial level.

Strong Support for Integrating LTC into Health System

What is the path forward? What do Canadians think is the right way to rehabilitate the long-term care system? Changing the way the sector is administrated feels promising for many: 86% believe that long-term care should be an integrated part of our health system and funded and administered accordingly, while 75% agree LTC homes should be overseen by the same groups that oversee the operation of hospitals and other health clinics.

About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between November 27-December 1, 2020, on behalf the Canadian Medical Association. For this survey, a

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